

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BELGRA 01555 040816Z

45

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 040746Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8946

INFO AMCONSUL ZAGREB UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 1555

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT YO

SUBJECT: TITO'S APPEARANCE DURING BOSNIA VISIT

1. TV NEWSCAST EVENING APRIL 2 GAVE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF TITO'S VISIT EARLIER IN DAY TO TOWNS OF DOBOJ, ZENICA, TRAVNIK AND BUGOJNO -- ALL IN BOSNIA. (TRIP HAD NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE.) OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT TITO WAS, AT LEAST ON THAT DAY, SHOWING DEFINITE SIGNS OF AGE. HIS DESCENT DOWN THE SPECIAL RAMP FROM HIS CAR IN THE BLUE TRAIN WAS ALMOST PAINFULLY SLOW. ONCE HE HESITATED BEFORE STEPPING OFF A CURB. HIS LACKLUSTER REMARKS AT A SMALL MEETING IN DOBOJ WERE DELIVERED IN AN ALMOST INAUDIBLE VOICE; SEVERAL TIMES SOMEONE OFF-CAMERA CHIMED IN TO SUPPLY WORDS WHEN THE OLD MAN PAUSED IN HIS DELIVERY -- THERE WAS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR VIEWERS TO TELL WHETHER HE HAD REALLY LOST TRAIN OF THOUGHT OR WHETHER HE WAS SIMPLY SPEAKING VERY SLOWLY.

2. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO READ TOO MUCH INTO ONE BAD PERFORMANCE ON TITO'S PART. ANYONE WHO HAS TRIED TO SLEEP IN A TRAIN TRAVELING OVER BOSNIAN ROADBEDS CAN TESTIFY TO DIFFICULTIES OF GETTING GOOD NIGHT'S REST. BUT IF TV COVERAGE WAS INTENDED TO SHOW THAT TITO IS HIS OLD SELF AGAIN, IT WAS SINGULARLY UNSUCCESSFUL. BELGRAD RUMOR MILL CAN BE EXPECTED TO START GRINDING OUT MORE STORIES OF HEALTH/SENILITY PROBLEMS AS A RESULT.

TOON

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NNN

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